

GAL Testimony

EXHIBIT 12
DATE 1/24/2011
HB 281

Mr. Chairman and Committee,

I am Shannon Amour, AMOUR from Superior in Mineral County. Thank you for this opportunity to speak in favor of HB 281.

There is need of stricter regulation and training within the GAL system. If there had been a grievance procedure my family would not have had to endure what it did. Judges rely on GALs to make life changing decisions. In my case the GALs recommendations were not based upon what was best interest of my children, but were based on a personal relationship with my ex-husband and the GAL, and that GALs profit motive.

After assuring my daughters that everything they told the GAL would be kept confidential, the GAL then scolded them for the frustration and anger they expressed in emails sent to her. These emails were forwarded to me, my ex-husband, and his attorney. The GAL told the girl's therapists they needed to teach the girls to be respectful and she expected an apology. The GAL assured the girls that what their therapists told her would be kept private. She again violated confidentiality by reporting to the children's father statements that were made in their therapy sessions. Their father badgered them relentlessly about what should have remained in the therapy office. Because of this, the girls no longer felt safe in therapy.

The GAL made major changes to the parenting plan without seeking my input, only that of my children's father. In fact, he wrote a major portion of the plan. These changes were all biased in his favor. The GAL insisted that the therapeutic relationship with their current providers be terminated and the girls see a therapist of the GALs choosing. Indeed, she contacted the therapists and told them their services were no longer needed. When I called the GAL to voice my concerns over the changes I was told "to take it up with the Judge"

This GAL has a personal relationship with my ex-husband, his girlfriend and her family, even treating members of her family professionally. My ex-husband's girlfriend was a Registered Sex Offender at the time. She was, by Court Order, to have no contact with minor females. The GAL stated in Court that she had "talked" to the woman and determined her to be no threat to my children and wrote this in the parenting plan. This GAL has no training as a Sex Offender Therapist or to conduct Offender Evaluations and testified to that effect. The Judge did nothing.

The GAL system, while well intentioned, caused my children harm. These are a few instances of where better regulation; training and a grievance procedure could have saved my family some of the turmoil and anguish caused by this person. If my speaking here today enables legislation to be enacted to prevent this from happening to others I would consider myself and my family partially vindicated for the hardships we have endured.

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